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SANTERIA:

A RELIGION OF DIVINATION, MAGIC, AND ANIMAL SACRIFICE

by Donald T. Moore

When the U.S. Supreme Court struck down an ordinance that prohibited animal sacrifices, the Court legalized the practice as a result. The sect known as Santeria thus gained a victory for its bloody rites.

What is Santeria? It is an Afro-Caribbean religion that combines animism, pantheism, ancestor worship, and Roman Catholicism. It is a syncretistic religion that combines its belief in the *Orishas*—the gods of the Yoruba and Bantu pantheons of southwest Nigerian origin—with the Catholic saints.ⁱ

Santeria consists of myths, stories, and legends (or *pataki*) that provide a basis for its customs and ceremonies. Although more than 400 deities exist, only 16 are actively worshipped. Those deities that form the foundation of the religion are Obatalá, Oshún, Yemaya (or Yemalla), Oyá, and Changó (or Shango). The four warriors are Elegguá, Oggún, Ochosi, and Osun. It is around these foundational and warrior Orishas—or head guardians—that rites of initiation, divination, and magic are celebrated.

In essence, Santeria offers its believers (known as *santeros*) the means of acquiring predictive knowledge of the world, as well as access to the principal sources of power. Its practice is supposedly limited to white magic and excludes any black witchcraft. Those who observe Santeria worship *Olofi*—also called *Olodumare* and *Olorún*—their almighty god and supreme being. Santeros believe that it is in the forces of nature where the Orishas manifest Olofi's will.

The santero's central goals are to worship the saints (Orishas), observe feasts, obey orders, and carry out rites. In exchange for total submission, believers are promised supernatural powers and protection from evil—including health, influence, position, and the ability to see and modify the future.

How did Santeria arise? During the colonization of Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, and Trinidad—thousands of Yoruba natives were transported there as slaves. These slaves remained attached to their religious practices and African traditions, even though they were forced to adjust to the environment of the New World. However, due to Catholic persecution in Cuba, they were unable to practice their religion openly. So the slaves assimilated the symbols of the Roman Catholic Church, the only legal religion in Cuba, with their own. Because of the similarities between the Catholic saints and the Orishas, they gave their deities Catholic names. Thus, when celebrating their rituals, the slaves appeared to be believing Catholics. In reality, they were secretly worshiping the Yoruba Orishas.

Over several centuries, this process of adaptation meant that the Nigerianⁱⁱ Yoruba practices were modified to resemble other African tribal customs and religions. With the mass exit from Cuba after the 1959 communist revolution, this faith in Orishas was exported to Puerto Rico,ⁱⁱⁱ Panama, Venezuela, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. It was also introduced to different urban centers in the United States—including Miami, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New Jersey.

The Deities of Santeria

Santeros believe that Orishas are supernatural beings that emanate from Olofi, the creator god of humankind and the saints. They have two noteworthy characteristics. The first is their ability to control a variety of human forces, enterprises, and interests. The second is their representation of the different elements and forces of nature.

The following are some of the foundational and warrior deities which were previously discussed:

- *Obatalá*: associated with the Catholic saint Our Lady of Mercy—is the father of the Orishas and creation. He is also the patron of peace and purity.
- *Orúnla*: also known as *Ifá* and *Orúnmila*—is the patron of the high priests (known as *babalawos*) and the principal magician of the Yoruba pantheon. He is equated with the Catholic saint Francis of Assisi.
- *Yemaya*: the patron of the seas and of motherhood—gave birth to 14 of the most important Orishas, including Changó. She is likened to the Virgin of Regla.
- *Oshún*: the younger sister of Yemaya and the queen of love, marriage, gold, and the rivers—is the favorite concubine of Changó, is associated with Our Lady of Charity, and is the patron saint of Cuba.
- *Oyá*: the queen of the dead—is the ruler of fire, wind, and the cemetery. This daughter of Yemaya is equated with Saint Theresa and the Virgin of Candelaria. Puerto Rico is known as the land of Oyá.
- *Changó*: the Orisha of virility—is the patron of fire, drums, dance, lightning, and thunder. A great warrior, he gives victory over one's enemies, as well as every difficulty. This son of Yemaya, is likened to Saint Barbara.

Four deities form the group identified as the warriors. They are Elegguá, Oggún, Ochosi and Osun.

- *Elegguá*: also known as *Elegba*—is the guardian of the doors, including the door of death. He acts as the messenger of Olofi and the other Orishas to the human world. Without his permission nothing can be accomplished. As the principal deity of divination for the santero, he is associated with St. Anthony and the Holy Infant of Prague.
- *Oggún*: a son of Yemaya—is equated with St. Peter. He is the patron of metals, technology, and every working person.
- *Ochosi*: also a son of Yemaya—is likened to St. Norbert. He is the patron of the hunters, and acts as a translator for Obatalá.
- *Osun*: or *Osain*—is the Orisha that always accompanies Elegguá and is associated with St. John the Baptist. Osun warns santeros when danger arises and is seen as the embodiment of joy.

In addition to the Catholic saints symbolizing these deities, the Orishas are also represented by the *fundamentos* and secrets of the saints. These *fundamentos* are one or more stones (*otanes*) grouped together for someone's initiation (*asiento*). Also included are 16 cowrie shells (*diloggun*) and several *atributos*—or small figures and objects—that represent the powers and characteristics of the deity. The consecrated stones, kept in deep bowls colorfully decorated to represent the Orisha, means to obtain benefits and protection for the believer. They are full of *ashé*—which means they are made of cosmic energy. The *fundamentos* are the most basic representation of the Orisha and are treated like living beings. They are even bathed with sacred liquids made from plants, cleaned, rubbed with oil, and fed with the blood of the deity's favorite animal. After being converted into the abodes of the Orishas, the stones acquire both the personality and power (*ashé*) of the god that resides within them. Cowrie shells are used for divination. The initiate keeps them in his house with the other religious objects, instead of in special temples. Most rituals are conducted in the homes of believers.

The bead necklaces (*eleke*) are made of the characteristic color of each Orisha, and are another important symbol. The colors of the Orishas radiate *ashé*. When a santero wears an Orisha's colors, he is protected because any magical spell directed toward him is deflected. Thus, the Orishas are said to protect their children with their colors.

Initiations

There are two courses for growth in the Santeria hierarchy of power and prestige. These paths are ritualized, eleven-step progressions that guide the person from non-believer to the elevated knowledge and protection^{iv} of an *omókoloba* (one that has received Olofi). Different rituals help the santero acquire power and knowledge. Non-believers do not have the power that this religion promises and, therefore, lack adequate protection against evil. Both paths require the person to receive the initiation of the warriors, although other steps vary.^v

Frequently, the initiation is referred to as *asiento*—which signifies contract and obligation. The Orisha agrees to protect his child, who, in turn, promises to serve the Orisha. *Making the saint* is another expression used in reference to the initiation.

The process of initiation is long, complicated, and costly^{vi}. It consists of several phases and varies according to the Orisha. First, it is necessary to determine which of the deities corresponds to the person that is seeking help. This is accomplished through a divinatory process done by a santero or a high priest (*bablawo*).^{vii} An initiation begins with the reception of necklaces and ends with the *asiento*. The preparations for the initiation include a special bath and dressing with white clothes as a symbol of the new life. Sometimes the waters of the purification bath symbolize the amniotic liquid of birth. During the ceremony, the initiate is formally assigned an Orisha that will protect and watch over him. The ceremony includes animal sacrifices, prediction of the initiate's future, and obedience to taboos and restrictions for a year. During this time, the initiate must submit to certain prohibitions concerning apparel, sexual relations, food, and daily life.

Animal sacrifices are essential for the initiation, because the blood is necessary for birth. It is believed that during the *asiento*, one is born to a new life as a child (*omo*) of the Orisha.

For many santeros, this initiation is the first of a series of ceremonies that serve to dedicate them to more Orishas. Upon becoming a saint, two paths are opened to the santero—that which is open to every man and woman, and that of Orúnla (which is open to men who will become high priests).

During the ceremonies, drums and dances facilitate an altered state of consciousness known as a *trance*. This is identified as *when the saint comes down*, because the Orisha descends upon the head of the santero and has control over the frenetic movements of the possessed person. These frenzied gestures allow onlookers to identify the deity.

On other occasions, the blood of the sacrificed animal is either poured directly over the sacred stones (*otanes*), or the initiate drinks it—symbolizing its consumption by the Orisha.

Divinatory Practices

Due to their concept of reincarnation, santeros believe that, prior to birth, it is possible to choose one's own destiny. This implies that there are predetermined aspects of life—such as one's character, work, economic status, intelligence, fortune, and longevity. Although it is not possible to change one's destiny, violating an Orisha's prohibition, disobeying a deity, and magical curses can worsen it. Because of this, the divinatory ceremonies—or counsels of Olofi—are of immense importance. Through them, a person receives valuable advice about how to make his destiny less severe, how to decrease the number of problems that impact his life, and how to increase the benefits available to him. Divination helps to improve the santero's life. The santero learns to eliminate negative influences by uncovering their origins and obeying the instructions given him. The believer not only discovers the spiritual reasons for the difficult situations in his life, but also is informed of how to overcome them. In addition, the experiences of the Orishas in mythology offer models of action which the believer can emulate.

The usual celebrants of the divinatory rituals are the *babalawo* (high priests) and santeros. Normally, their instruments of divination are, respectively, the *opele* and the *diloggun* (or cowrie shells). The ceremonies that rely upon divination include the reception of necklaces; the initiation; the lustral baths; animal sacrifices; the vegetable, fruit, and sweet offerings; and the candles offered during a spiritual or Catholic Mass. Frequently the *obi* and the *diloggun* are asked questions about the will of the gods; thus, these rituals are characterized as propitiatory, preventive, and reparative. Coconuts (*obi*) are the basic tool of the divinatory system, but are

limited to answering simple yes or no questions. Any believer may consult the coconut—even a person who has not yet been initiated. The santeros use coconuts in their principal ceremonies to divine the future and determine if the deity likes a certain offering.

The *opele* is a chain filled with eight pieces of coconut. The babalawo takes the chain by the middle and throws it on the floor so that the halves of the *opele* fall parallel to each other.^{viii} There are 16 ways in which each half can fall. These positions determine the interpretation given. The *opele* is thrown a number of times to determine the source affecting the person for good or evil. When it is discovered which Orisha is protecting the person, questions are asked to establish which ritual is required by the deity. Generally, whatever the *opele* registers is valid for a period of two to three months, excluding serious situations.

The cowrie shells (*diloggun*) are also instruments of divination. The sixteen shells serve as the voice of the deity in answering questions. The shells of Elegguá are normally used, because Elegguá interprets the solutions given by the Orishas. Although the shells of other deities are used for divination, they are rarely used during the believer's life. The procedure of the shells is similar to that of the *opele*. However, a litany of invocations is used to communicate with the deities. Permission is requested of the guardian angel consulted, the shells are thrown three times in order to obtain a key letter and two secondary ones, the additional five shells are used so that by means of yes and no answers, one can find out . . . by the hand of whom it is so, what saint protects him and what he should do in order to clear his path.”^{ix}

In addition, there are other instruments of divination such as the *ikines*, that consist of sixteen seeds from two plants. However, their use is extremely rare.

Animal Sacrifice

Sacrifice is fundamental to the worship of the Orishas, and there are traditional sacrificial techniques that are mandatory.

Animal blood is crucial to most important ceremonies, and each Orisha requires particular sacrifices that provide him with vital cosmic energy (*ashé*). One Orisha may prefer a goat, calf, pig, fish, sheep, or turtle; while another calls for hens, chickens, roosters, guineas, geese, turkeys, or ducks. There are also offerings that do not involve blood, such as honey, fruits, vegetables, black beans, and rice.

The Orishas that materialize in the stones, cowrie shells, and *elekes* (bead necklaces), do not eat the flesh of the sacrificed animals. Instead, the *ashé* contained in the blood is poured out over the fundamentos and the heads of the initiates. The sacred Yoruba words of consecration liberate this energy, and the blood enhances the Orishas' energy. It keeps them potent, efficient, and satisfied with the worshipers.

There is no salvation, prosperity, or security in Santeria without sacrifice. The gods cannot do without the sacrificial blood because it increases their energies. Those santeros, who participate in the sacrifice, benefit by communing with the Orishas and being strengthened by the *ashé*.

Other reasons for animal sacrifice include obtaining forgiveness from an Orisha, averting the fury of the creator, and symbolizing the new birth of an initiate. Sacrifices also can be made to obtain favor from an Orisha, to free oneself from a magical jinx, to cleanse and purify, or to turn away death.^x

Santeros justify animal sacrifices by arguing that since the beginning, every covenant between God and man has been authenticated by animal blood. The victim is needed as proof of man's intention to honor the agreement. The blood represents the energy from which everything was created. Offering blood to a deity is equated with giving him a gift of pure energy that can be used in creation. Candles and food offerings are also given to the Orishas, in order to replenish their powers. However, of the three kinds of offerings, the blood sacrifice is the most important and indispensable because its energy comes from a living being.

The blood of sacrificed animals belongs to the Orishas and, therefore, to the creator god Olofi. It is his by divine right. The killing of the animals is carried out in ceremonies with great solemnity and respect. Only trained santeros, who have submitted to the appropriate initiatory rites, are permitted to officiate.^{xi}

Santeros argue that the Bible is filled with examples of the Israelite sacrificing to their God. Abraham was even willing to sacrifice his only son to please the Almighty. In the book of Leviticus, Yahweh instructed

Moses how to prepare and sacrifice the burnt offering (see Lev. 1:5). When the tabernacle was completed, the twelve princes representing the tribes of Israel brought 20 animals for sacrifice (see Num. 7:11-17). Joseph and Mary complied with Leviticus 12 and took two doves to the temple to be sacrificed on the eighth day after Jesus was born (see Luke 2:22-24). Even Jesus highlighted the importance of the blood sacrifice during the last supper, when He identified the wine as the blood of the new covenant.

Santeros also point out that Jewish rabbis have received permission to sacrifice animals in accordance with the laws of Moses. The purification rite of *Kaparot*, which Hassidic Jews observe on the eve of *Yom Kippur* (or Day of Atonement) to reconcile for the absence of the Temple in Jerusalem, concludes with the killing of hundreds of birds.

The santeros and their families eat most of the animals they sacrifice. They believe that great healing powers in the meat consecrated to the Orishas keep those who eat it healthy. However, when an animal is sacrificed in a purification rite, they believe that the meat absorbs the problems, dangers, and negative vibrations of the person who received the cleansing. Consequently, they never eat this meat. Rather, it is disposed of in accordance with the instructions of the Orisha. Their argument, based on reincarnation, insists that the sacrifice of animals for a spiritual cause greatly enhances spiritual evolution.

Finally, because everything in nature is filled with forces and energies, when it is given to the Orishas, the worshipper receives back the blessing a thousand times.^{xii}

Ancestral Spirits

The veneration of ancestors is a crucial aspect of this religion. Its roots are founded in the belief that the Orishas have lived and died, and now exist as supernatural forces. The dead^{xiii} are fundamental because they open the doors that lead to the Orishas. It is necessary to honor the dead by paying their dues, calling upon them, praying to them, and feeding them. For this reason, santeros will make sacrifices and adorn sticks with ribbons and bells. The dead depend upon the living to keep them strong and energetic.^{xiv}

Every ceremony begins with an act of reverence to the dead that often includes remote ancestors. Santeros believe that the dead can intervene in people's lives by providing them with protection or pestering them. Thus, it is necessary to exalt and appease them in order to earn their favor. When the dead are cared for and receive attention, they are protective and kind. The santeros believe that they must guard against grieving or mourning souls and dark spirits with bad intentions since they are stronger than the living. Thus, it is essential to invoke the ancestors, and honor them with prayers to the dead.

In at least one ceremony, a four-footed animal, normally a pig, is sacrificed to the dead. During the sacrifice, worshipers sing and pray in Yoruba to the deceased, beginning with the most important departed santeros. The head of the pig is severed from its body and placed on a white plate. The head and blood are then put under the altar where the dead can feed upon it.

On occasion, constant recitation of prayers to deceased ancestors is recommended. This includes lighting candles to them, and, in some cases, incorporating glasses of water and coffee as signs of love and respect for them.

Rationalistic and Realistic Interpretations

Our society has three prevalent explanations for the supernatural: the rationalistic interpretation, the interpretation of realism, and biblical realism. The *rationalistic interpretation*, sometimes based on the scientific method, insists that all such manifestations are products of the human mind. No external supernatural reality exists and people's experiences are not considered to be reliable evidence. Thus, the believers of Santeria do not really have spiritual encounters. Rather, their perceptions of supernatural activity are created by their imaginations.

Scientific method is based on the supposition that reality can be measured and verified by the five senses. That means that beliefs in an afterlife and supernatural events cannot have validity because they cannot be quantified. Frequently, such beliefs and practices are classified as superstition or self-suggestion because they

have no objective reality outside the faith of believers. Though the scientific method relates very well to the study of certain phenomena, it is too limited for the analysis of existential matters such as human moral and spiritual values.

The second explanation is the *interpretation of realism*, which recognizes that there is a reality beyond what the human mind and senses can perceive. Spiritual realism acknowledges the existence of the supernatural world and life beyond the grave. People sometimes have experiences that do not arise from the material world, and what appears miraculous, may well be supernatural action. In fact, many santeros believe that miracles are brought about by Orishas that exist solely on the spiritual plane.

Carl Gustav Jung, Swiss psychiatrist and father of analytical psychology, recognized that people could experience a reality beyond the five senses. He developed a hypothesis about the *collective unconscious of humanity*, which is the knowledge all people are born with. This unconscious is made up of *archetypes*—or organizing principles—which shape the way people experience the world. According to this hypothesis, each Orisha can be interpreted as an archetype that assists individual aspects of the human personality to develop. Each Orisha, then, would help to grow and advance the santero in a different way, and individuals would be naturally drawn to the Orisha that resembles their interests, strengths, and talents the most. González-Wippler argues that the personification of the Orishas helps to harmonize the different elements of the unconscious within the human psyche.

When an Orisha takes possession of a person, its psychic energies dominate the person for the moment. That individual, then, exhibits the extraordinary powers and exceptional knowledge of the future that are found in the natural attributes of the Orisha.^{xv} From Jung's point of view, every deity and angelic force become points of contact within the human unconscious and they are accessed by means of prayers, visualizations, invocations, and ceremonies. They are the concentrated energies of the human race that have developed throughout the evolutionary process.

Jung identified powerful negative forces, or *shadows*, as concentrations of everything repressed—anger, frustration, resentment, hate, and negative inclinations. According to him, people should integrate the shadow within the other archetypes of personality—a technique he identified as the *process of individualization*. Orishas, then, help the santero integrate shadows and achieve individualization.^{xvi}

The third explanation is *biblical realism* that recognizes the existence of two worlds: the spiritual and the material. It affirms the existence and importance of God's material creation and spiritual kingdom.

Biblical realism teaches that the spiritual world is divided into two kingdoms. The first is the realm, ruled by God, and inhabited by angelic messengers. The other is an evil dominion, controlled by Satan and the demons. Both kingdoms can penetrate the human dimension. For the Christian, the Orishas and deceased ancestors of Santeria produce the real manifestations for they originate in the satanic kingdom of darkness. The images and saints that symbolize deities are, in fact, evil spirits and demons (see 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 10:19-20).

It is inappropriate to attribute every phenomenon in this world to the spiritual realm since the human mind is not completely understood. Some phenomena can be attributed to coincidence and have no direct relationship to the supernatural world. Why is Santeria so popular in the twenty-first century? Perhaps the most important reason is the knowledge that the santero believes he acquires about himself and the forces of nature. He feels that his soul is integrated with nature in some way. Others seek the ancient mysteries and special powers that are absent from secularized and rationalistic societies.

A Christian Evaluation

From the biblical perspective, there are a number of negative points to be made about Santeria. The most important is that Santeria ignores Jesus Christ, His teachings, and redemptive work. Though santeros insist that antiquity and the greatness of African civilizations give credibility to Santeria, the criteria for truth is neither age nor cultural achievement. Spiritual truth can best be known through a relationship with God and His revealed will. For this reason, the definitive revelation of God for every person is through Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son (see John 1:18; Heb. 1:1-14). Consequently, Christianity is Christ-centered.

Second, the basis of Santeria is the worship of spirits, whereas in Christianity only God is worthy of worship even though demons do exist (see Eph. 2:1-2; 6:12). According to the experience of Jesus and the apostles, these spirits are evil and can possess people (see Matt. 12:43-45), even speaking with human vocal chords (Mark 5:1-13) and predicting the future (Acts 16). These deities promote practices—such as divination and sorcery—which are manifestations of the kingdom of darkness. Although the images, myths, and names of the Orishas hide the identity of the evil one—Satan’s deceptions are unmistakably present. Those spirits of darkness that pretend to be loving beings of light are actually leading people down the path of destruction (see 1 Tim. 4:1).

The required invocation of spirits leads to the demon-possession of the santero. Though they may be called Orishas and ancestral spirits, they belong to the kingdom of lies. God created individuals with the capacity to choose to worship Him by spiritual and rational means (see Rom. 12:1-2). When one submits to possession, he voluntarily gives up the ability to choose and allows the evil spirit to make decisions for him.

Third, Christ is more powerful than all of the spirits and Orishas. The gospels agree that Christ has power over every kind of spirit—even when thousands of them unite within an individual (see Mark 5:1-20). Jesus attained His greatest victory over the kingdom of darkness by His death on the cross and resurrection (see Col. 2:13-15). Paul referred to the demons (see Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Col. 1:16) as principalities and authorities that are subject to Christ’s rule. Though the crucifix is an image of Christ’s death on the cross—it is the empty cross that truly symbolizes His victory over death.

Another point of contention is that santeros claim to be monotheists—believing in only one creator god, Olofi. However, their ritual practices show them to be polytheists. Their legends describe a creator so distant and transcendent that he has no personal interest in any human being. The Orishas were created to be mediators between humans and Olofi. Santeria’s concept of the creator god resembles the biblical revelation in some respects, but not sufficiently to be acceptable. Some obvious differences are that Olofi approves of divination, delegates elements of nature to the Orishas, and had a brother named Oddua. These distortions of the original revelation are due to the fall of man and the influence of sin that have perverted and twisted the vision of the Creator God.

Another negative point of Santeria is that the deities have the same weaknesses as human beings. They have material desires, form amorous bonds, get into conflicts, and become jealous. They are violent, belligerent, have prejudices, get drunk, commit adultery, and engage in incest. Almost all of the Orishas are witches and practice divination and magic. They are vulnerable, passionate, and vengeful. Contrast these qualities of the Orishas with the holiness of God and the example set by the life of Jesus Christ, and it is easy to see that there is very little common ground between them (see 1 Pet. 2:18-25).

Santeria is, in essence, a pagan religion. Santeria thrives on divination; *necromancy* (consultation with the dead); and sexual magic with its special powders, baths, and incense. It utilizes amulets; fetishes (*Osain*); and sacred water (*Omiero*) that supposedly purifies, regenerates, and cures with the concentrated power of the Orishas.^{xvii} According to the Bible, all of these practices are utterly against the will of God (see Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6; Deut. 18:10-12; 2 Kings 23:24; Acts 19:19; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 22:15).

The exclusive interest of Santeria is resolving personal problems. Santeria does not work for the good of society or the welfare of the community. In fact, the moral norms within Santeria are kept for the purpose of making ceremonies more effective, and not for the civility or well being of the people.^{xviii} It is the ceremony that makes one a saint. Even the belief in reincarnation is incompatible with Biblical teachings.^{xix} Conversely, the Christian does not achieve sainthood through ceremonies or the manipulation of God (see 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:16). God is just, righteous, and pure; therefore He demands that those who worship Him be holy and perfect as He is (see Matt. 5:44-48).

Animal sacrifices to the Orishas serve purposes very different from those of the Old Testament. The purposes for Old Testament sacrifices are varied. Some were given as joyous gifts to God (see Ex. 23:15; Deut. 16:16), while others sealed alliances between men and with God (see Ex. 24:8-11). Offerings were sometimes made for the forgiveness of sin (see Lev. 16:11), and often served to instruct the people about the holiness of

the Lord and the sinfulness of man. They were a constant reminder of the seriousness of sin and how blood is always necessary for its forgiveness (see Heb. 9:22). The annual repetition of the atonement sacrifice indicated the ineffectiveness of the offerings to completely eliminate sin (see Heb. 10:11-14). However, the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross forever eliminated the need for any more blood to be spilt.

Hebrews clearly teaches that the blood of Old Testament sacrifices never could atone for man's sin (see Heb. 10:4). However, chapters nine and ten testify that Christ accomplished forgiveness for sin once and for all. Although the animals were sacrificed by force, Christ's sacrifice was His own voluntary decision (see Heb. 10:5-10). Therefore, His sacrifice on the cross is a superior sacrifice in that it covers all the sins of the people (see Heb. 9:16-28). Thus, today there is absolutely no need for animal sacrifices.

Finally, when one dies, where does the spirit go? Does it roam indefinitely? The Bible teaches that all spirits go to a place where they await final judgment. The dead can never return to life, nor can they do evil to those living. Therefore, manifestations of spirits have nothing to do with the dead. There exist, then, beings that deceive people and present themselves as the spirits of the dead.^{xx} The Christian, calls them evil spirits, fallen angels, and demons. Those who profess Jesus as Savior and Lord go to be with Christ forever (see 2 Cor. 5:1-10). This is the Christian's eternal hope and certainty.

ⁱIn Cuba, Santería is also known as Lucumí, La Regla de Ocha, and La Regla de Santo. In Brazil, it is called Candomblé Jeje-Nago. The African name of Santería is Ocha. Literally, the name Santería means the worship of saints. Due to its dependence upon oral traditions and lack of written scriptures, several Afro-American traditions exist.

ⁱⁱSome archaeological studies have pointed out the possibility of a cultural contact between Egypt and Nigeria. They suggest that in the sixth century some emigrants from the destroyed Meroita civilization may have gone to the Yoruba lands in Nigeria. They would have traveled through Sudan by way of the Nile to the Niger River. The Meroe civilization, which resided to the south of Egypt, was greatly influenced by the Egyptians, and it has been established that certain aspects of Egyptian religious practice were present in the Yoruba religion. (Sánchez, Julio. *La Religión de los Orichas* [Hato Rey: Julio A. Sánchez Cárdenas, 1978], p. 8).

ⁱⁱⁱThe first santeros settled in Puerto Rico between 1945 and 1950. After Cuba's communist revolution (1959), the santeros began to leave the country, and Santería did not really begin to grow on the island until 1965. By 1970, Cuban santero Roberto Boluffer Fernández was consecrated as the first *babalawo* (high priest) in Puerto Rico, and, in 1975, more priests were consecrated. Presently there are more than 40 high priests in Puerto Rico. The Yoruba Temple (Omo Orisha) in San Juan is one of several centers on the island. The number of initiates in Puerto Rico is estimated to be between 15,000 and 150,000.

^{iv}Julio Sánchez Cárdenas. *La Religión de los Orichas* (Hato Rey: Julio Sánchez Cárdenas, 1978), p. 33.

^vSee Sánchez's diagram on p. 34.

^{vi}The initiate's godparents are required to pay for the initiation, that can amount to \$3,500 or more. If they do not have the money, he cannot be initiated. Some get loans to pay for this rite.

^{vii}A high priest (*babalawo*) and a santero carry out different functions, since a high priest does not have the right to initiate or give necklaces. The high priest can only officiate in the initiation of the patron Orúnla when a man becomes a *babalawo* or when he receives Elegguá and the warriors. The function of the high priest is primarily judicial, since he makes some of the most important decisions in the religion.

^{viii}Sánchez, 48.

^{ix}*Ibid.*, 62.

^x*Ibid.*, p. 36.

^{xi}Migene González-Wippler, *The Santería Experience*, rev. ed. (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1992), pp. 306-307.

^{xii}*Ibid.*, 173-185.

^{xiii}Some santeros submit themselves to the initiation of *palo monte* or *palo mayombe*. The *paleros*, following an African tradition from the Congo, work exclusively with the dead. They also have expert knowledge of plants. Some paleros practice black magic, and others use their knowledge to heal. In order to do his work, the palero must go to the cemetery, unearth a corpse, put the bones in a pan, and make a pact with that dead being. The palero can then obtain things for that dead person and the dead will aid the palero.

^{xiv}González-Wippler, pp. 160-172.

^{xv}*Ibid.*, pp. 112-114.

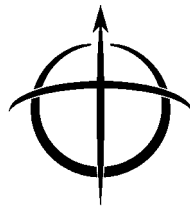
^{xvi}*Ibid.*, 130-131.

^{xvii}Cabrera, Lydia, *Yemayá y Ochún* (Madrid: Colección del Chicherukú en el exilio, 1974), pp. 290-341.

^{xviii}*Ibid.*, 141-142.

^{xix}"The Evidences for Reincarnation," *Sound Doctrine* (III:1) (Feb.-June, 1991).

^{xx}"Spiritism and the Christian," *Sound Doctrine* (I:2) (May-Aug., 1989).



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